

GROUNDING IN THE PLACE THAT YOU RESIDE

A RITUAL FOR SUKKOT

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BACKGROUND

As a diasporic people Jews sit at the convergence of the story of our ancestors and the stories of the places in which we dwell. We have many holidays and rituals that honor the stories of our people, but what mechanisms do we have in place to remind us to honor the stories of the places we find ourselves living? Perhaps we can find them in Sukkot. Sukkot is a holiday that asks us to set up temporary dwellings, to be closer to the land on which we reside, to call in our ancestors, to sit with the beauty and discomfort of shedding our false notions of security and embrace the truth that we are always in a state of change. It can also be a moment to learn the stories of the places we live and honor the land that holds us.

BACKGROUND

During the holiday of Sukkot it is customary to perform the ritual of the four species with the Lulav and Etrog. The lulav refers to a collection of three branches tied together (palm, willow, and myrtle) and the etrog is a citrus fruit native to the land of our ancient stories. The ritual, which is traditionally performed while standing in the sukkah facing east, consists of holding the lulav and etrog together (the lulav in the right hand and the etrog in the left), and shaking them three times in each of the six directions - in front of you (to the east), to the right (south), behind you (west), to the left (north), up towards the sky and down to the earth. For further reading about how to perform the traditional ritual, refer to [this article](#).

A RITUAL THAT TURNS TOWARDS CHANGE

Action 1 - Learn about the place that you live

As Jews in North America, we are living on land that has been stolen from people whose stories have been erased. What do you know about the place you live? What do you know about the people who lived there before European Colonization? Research the local Indigenous history of the place that you live and find a story that has been erased from the settler narrative that you were taught. You can begin by consulting [this website](#).

Action 2 - Connect to the nature of that place

Find three types of branches and one fruit that are native to the land on which you live. Go out to a beautiful place near your home and create your own collection of four species. Perform the ritual of the lulav and etrog with your set of four native species. As you gesture to each of the six directions, take in the wonder and beauty of the place that has agreed to offer you dwelling in this moment.

Action 3 - Reflective questions for the six directions

As you contemplate the six directions, take a few moments to reflect (in writing or in your own way) on the following questions:

To the Front (East): What can I do to ensure that future generations have active models of living in balance with the earth that they can call upon?

To the Right (South): Who in my community can I look to for inspiration and support as I prepare to do the hard work of change that is required to heal my relationship with the earth?

To the Back (West): What can I do to honor my ancestors for the ways that they lived in partnership with the earth, and make amends for the ways that they did not?

To the Left (North): Who in my community can I reach out to and support while they prepare to do the hard work of change that is required to heal their relationship with the earth?

To the Sky: What does it feel like to truly understand myself as being connected to something greater than myself?

To the Ground: What does it feel like to feel myself being held by the earth?

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